

Traffic Safety Spotlight on Fatigue

BEWARE OF THE OTHER DRIVER!

By AE3(AW/SW) Daniel Konieczny, VFA-146

My squadron held all-hands quarters, discussing ORM and the process of making the correct choices. I dismissed the command's warning, thinking I never would be in any of the positions they were discussing. What a mistake!

After a long day of work, I made another mistake by driving three hours to visit my girlfriend in Los Angeles, knowing I had to return for work the following day.

I ignored the ORM training I had received on numerous occasions. After my evening in LA came to an end, I started driving back around midnight. Everything was going smoothly; I was awake and did not feel tired. About 50 miles from base, though, another individual veered into my lane, almost hitting my car.

I hit my brakes and swerved to avoid a collision and then swerved back onto the highway. When I tried to correct my first swerve, I went into a series of 360-degree turns down the highway. My car eventually left the road, with the tires catching in the dirt and my car flipping side-over-side. After several flips, I came to a stop. I could see that the car's roof was caved in, every window was broken, and the car was totaled.



Did I mention that I had purchased my 2005 Nissan Altima three weeks before and just had sent the first payment? The car that came into my lane continued down the highway without the driver ever looking back, as far as I know. As I regained my composure, I climbed into the back seat where I kicked open a door to escape. I noticed I was the only person there—no one had stopped to help me or to see what had happened. After a short search for my cell phone, I found it and dialed 911. My vehicle was towed, and I was left without a ride. My decision to drive to LA on a workday resulted in the total loss of my brand new car and about seven days of limited duty.

The lesson that can be learned from my actions is to think before you act. Consider all aspects of your actions. I could have ended my life or someone else's. Even if I had not been in an accident, I could have put my fellow maintainers and pilots at risk because I did not get enough sleep.

Don't make my mistake. I am lucky to be alive, and I will not be making an after work drive to LA again. I'll wait for a weekend and spend quality time, instead of being rushed. It is not worth the risk! 🦋

